

# Quarterly NEWS-LETTER

## OF THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

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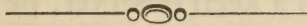
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### ARTIST IN ELDORADO

WHEN Daniel Wadsworth Coit, agent in Mexico City for the American banking house of Howland and Aspinwall, sat down at his desk on August 21, 1848 to write a letter home, he had an unusually interesting bit of news to relate: "Lieut. Beals of the navy arrived here express from San Blas yesterday, on his way to the United States as bearer of important dispatches from Commodore Jones to our government."

Coit did not underestimate the importance of the dispatches, but he could hardly have foreseen how profoundly the news they contained was to affect California, the United States, and the entire world during

the next few years. For Lieutenant Beals was hurrying to Washington with official confirmation of rumors that gold deposits "of the most extensive and richest descriptions" had been found in California.

That Coit should have been in Mexico City at the time the government messenger passed through is but one instance of his life-long habit of turning up in various parts of the world just when something of unusual interest was happening. Years earlier, he had arrived at Callao in time to witness a naval attack on the city by the Chilean fleet; in 1821 he reached London just as George IV was ascending the throne, and he was present at the coronation exercises in Westminster Abbey. In Mexico City, he watched the evacuation of the American army at the close of the Mexican War, and from the spring of '49 onward, he was in the midst of the California gold rush.

From the standpoint of posterity, Coit was the ideal Argonaut. He was a keen observer, he moved in circles that gave him access to authentic, first-hand information, and he was a regular and fluent letter-writer. Moreover, and perhaps most important of all, he was a trained and unusually competent artist (Finden's *Illustrations of the Life and Works of Lord Byron*, London, 1833-4, contains much of his work), and on his travels it was his habit to make detailed and beautifully executed drawings of the places that interested him.

Under the title, *An Artist in Eldorado*, the Club is soon to publish the San Francisco drawings and letters of Daniel Wadsworth Coit. The material gives what is undoubtedly one of the most vivid pictures of the city during the momentous years from '49 to '52. Neither the letters nor the sketches have hitherto been pub-



lished. The Club believes that they will be recognized as an important and valuable addition to the existing fund of knowledge about San Francisco during its most exciting period. The reasons why both drawings and letters have remained in obscurity for more than eighty years are interestingly told by Miss E. M. Coulter, who has edited the material for publication and who also contributes an extended biographical sketch of Coit.

*An Artist in Eldorado* will be the Club's next publication. It will be designed and printed by The Grabhorn Press, by whom the seven drawings of San Francisco and the bay will be reproduced in the sizes of the originals. A detailed announcement is in preparation and will be sent members soon. Here we shall merely state that the edition will be 325 copies and the price not more than \$5.00



## CONTEMPORARY CALIFORNIA SHORT STORIES

SINCE the June Quarterly appeared, members have received Parts Three and Four of the 1937 keepsakes series: Charles Caldwell Dobie's *The Crystal Ball*, published in June, and Gertrude Atherton's *The Foghorn*, distributed in August. The printers were, respectively, John Henry Nash and The Grabhorn Press.

The series has now progressed far enough to permit some estimate of its popularity and value. The interest evidenced by members leaves little doubt that it is regarded as an unusual and desirable item of Californiana. And of course the names of the printers doing the various parts are sufficient guaranty of the typographical excellence of the series. From the literary standpoint,

too, this group of stories has points of uncommon interest. Without calling them "great" or "best" California stories, or making other possibly extravagant claims, it may reasonably be said that all the stories so far issued are admirably conceived and executed, and are told with a literary distinction that makes them worthy examples of the best writing in this form now being done in the state.

Members will find Part Five, to be distributed about October 15, fully up to the standard set by its predecessors. James Hopper's *Pepe*, like many of this author's tales, deals with the descendents of the original white settlers of the Monterey peninsula. It is a study of the Spanish-Californian temperament, done with unusual insight and with a lightness of touch that, curiously enough, serves to emphasize the solid substance of the story. Readers will not soon forget this unpretentious but extraordinarily effective tale. Like the others of the series, *Pepe* will have an author's foreword especially written for this Club edition. The design and printing will be done by The Ward Ritchie Press, Los Angeles.



## BOOKS ON WESTERN GUNMEN

by GUY J. GIFFEN

*Editor's Note: Not the least interesting subdivision of Americana is that relating to the bandits and gunmen of the Old West. The extensive literature on the subject offers a tempting field to collectors with a taste for the history and legend surrounding this phase of the Winning of the West. Mr. Giffen's extensive collection of books on Western outlaws is the result of a hobby of years standing.*

OF all the subjects likely to interest book collectors, I know of none that includes so much fiction presented



under the guise of fact as that pertaining to the outlaws and gunmen of our Wild West.

The great popular interest in this subject seems to have been first created by Beadle's Dime Novels, about 1860, and further stimulated by the writings of Ned Buntline. These narratives were highly sensational in character, but they served to acquaint the world with some men who have ever since been famous, although in general their acts did not merit their reputations. "Buffalo Bill" Cody is the principal one of these.

As the years passed the dime novel writers turned their attention to other gunmen, giving them a notoriety that was usually in reverse of their actual records. "Billy the Kid" caught the public eye and, although his true history was bad enough, his deeds were preposterously exaggerated. The career of the California bandit, Joaquin Murrieta, was also romanticized to a point where he was capable of performing impossible feats, whereas Jack Powers, also a Californian and one of the bandit "400," remained little known. Tom Bell (Dr. Tom J. Hodges), whose operations in Northern California would fill a volume, is another gunman who has received far less than his share of printer's ink.

In a short article it is impossible to mention more than a few of the hundreds of books relating to this subject. Any well-rounded collection of Western Americana should have a division of books on gunmen, and the men and titles mentioned here will perhaps serve as a sort of general guide to their selection. Of particular interest to Californians are the books on Murrieta. *Joaquin Murrieta, the Brigand Chief of California*, published by the *Police Gazette* (San Francisco, 1854), is probably the first treatise on the illusive figure. It is now very





*Joaquin Murrieta, from a woodcut after a painting by Charles Nahl*



rare; only two copies are on record, both in private hands. In 1859, the *Gazette* reprinted the story, with additions, and in this case too only two copies are known to have survived. Of the many later treatments of Murrieta one of the best is *The Life and Adventures of the Celebrated Bandit, Joaquin Murrieta*, translated from the Spanish of Ireneo Paz by Frances P. Belle (Chicago, 1925). This is a readable account of his exploits, but it credits him with superhuman ability and relates incidents that could not have happened. His true history has not yet been told and at this late date it is unlikely that it ever will be.

Stories of two California bandits of a much later date, Evans and Sontag, are related in two contrasting books. In *The 25th Man*, published in 1924, the author, Ed Morrell, gives a readable account of his experiences with the outlaws, bearing a bit heavily on the first person. C. B. Glasscock's *Bandits and the Southern Pacific* (New York, 1929) is also an interesting narrative, although the author severely criticizes Morrell for several assertions, with no substantial proof that the latter was not correct. *Old Waybills*, by Alvin F. Harlow (New York, 1934), while primarily concerned with the pioneer express companies, gives entertaining accounts of Black Bart, the James Brothers, Sam Bass and the Daltons, and indicates a sincere effort to gather the facts.

The books of Owen P. White have added much to present-day popular knowledge of the outstanding killers and peace officers of the Old West. His *Them Was the Days* (New York, 1925), *Trigger Fingers* (New York, 1926), and *Lead and Likker* (New York, 1932) make exciting reading and present a true picture so far as the truth can now be known. *Triggernometry*, by Eugene

Cunningham (New York, 1935) is another obviously sincere effort to find and publish facts, and to treat the gunmen as human beings instead of supermen.

Returning to books about individual bandits, one of the best is *Wild Bill Hickok—Prince of Pistoleers*, by Frank J. Wilsatch (New York, 1928); this work also contains many illustrations of more than passing interest. "Wild Bill" (James Butler) Hickok has been much written about. Probably the best account of his connection with the famous McCanlas affair was published in the *Nebraska History Magazine* for April-June 1927; in it the story of Colonel Nichols, published in *Harper's Magazine* of February 1867 (and copied by practically every other biographer of Hickok) is disproved.

Of nineteen volumes dealing with the James gang, *The Rise and Fall of Jesse James*, by Robertus Love (New York, 1925) seems the most thorough and unbiased biography to come to my notice. An important—and scarce—item about this famous gang is *The Trial of Frank James for Murder* by George Miller, Jr., privately printed in Missouri in 1898; it gives in detail important information to be found nowhere else.

The list could go on indefinitely, for the period of the gunmen extended from the Civil War to the middle '90s, and the literature on the subject is limitless. Much of it of course is lurid, sensational material, written solely for entertainment and with no claim to historical accuracy. But there are also many more pretentious works: good, bad and indifferent. Many otherwise excellent biographies of Western gunmen are marred by the fact that the author's treatment is colored by his admiration, or contempt, for his subject. But perhaps that is a failing of biographers in general.

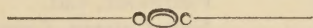


## QUARTER CENTURY

THE twenty-fifth anniversary of the Club's founding falls in December of this year. Plans are under way to commemorate the event by the publishing in the December News-Letter the story of the Club's origin and of some of its early trials and accomplishments.

It is planned also to include a complete bibliography of the Club publications from 1912 to date. No such list has been compiled for more than a decade, although rather frequent inquiries from members and others indicate that one is needed.

That the Club has managed to survive for twenty-five years is an accomplishment worthy of more than passing attention. The 1912-1937 period is often termed a commercial age, with all that implies in the way of competition and what economists call the profit motive. Yet the Club, a mere association of booklovers and fine printing enthusiasts, with no commercial or profit-making aspirations whatever, has not only survived but has made a substantial growth. The occasion seems to call for a moderate degree of boasting. In December, therefore, the Club will boast moderately.



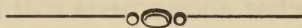
## HUNTINGTON LIBRARY EXHIBITION

BEGINNING July 1 and continuing through September, a selection of the Club's publications is being shown in the main exhibition room of The Huntington Library at San Marino.

In connection with the exhibit, a broadside listing the publications on display and outlining the basis on which the selections were made, was printed by The

Grey Bow Press, of Pasadena. Because the broadside is of decided interest as a Club item, and because it is an uncommonly attractive piece of printing, the Club was delighted to accept an offer of the printers to run off a supply for the members. These were mailed toward the end of July.

For its exhibition, the Library selected from its collection of Club publications those works dealing with California life and letters. The broadside states: "It is apparent that the greatest unity and distinctiveness is found in this group of the Club's publications, and it is probably in the field of Californiana that the Club has rendered its most significant service." Supplementing the books shown in cases, a number of the parts of the first and second series of keepsakes are exhibited as wall pieces.



### ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

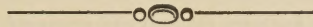
THE following new members have been added to the roll since June 1:

<i>Member</i>		<i>Sponsor</i>
Mrs. Frederick G. Albright	Oakland, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Wallace M. Alexander	Piedmont, Cal.	Harry East Miller
Miss Faith Baldwin	New Canaan, Conn.	Oscar Lewis
C. J. Bosworth	Piedmont, Cal.	Edward W. Engs, Jr.
Mrs. John Burnham, Jr.	Pasadena, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Edwin B. Callahan	Springfield, Mass.	Oscar Lewis
Mrs. Persis H. Coleman	Saratoga, Cal.	Alfred Sutro
Philip S. Ehrlich	San Francisco, Cal.	H. L. Zellerbach
Miss Ann Foster	San Mateo, Cal.	Alfred Sutro
Leon Friend	Brooklyn, N. Y.	Oscar Lewis
Everett Griffin	San Francisco, Cal.	John A. Sutro
Thomas Hamilton	San Diego, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Miss Pauline M. Hoefer	San Francisco, Cal.	S. I. Wormser
Edmund G. Johnson	Chicago, Ill.	Oscar Lewis
Willis Kerr	Claremont, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
C. Harold Lauck	Lexington, Va.	Oscar Lewis



Mrs. Charles E. Lee	Brookline, Mass.	Oscar Lewis
Mario Lenta	Oakland, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Albert Lewin	Santa Monica, Cal.	Albert M. Bender
Dr. Evelyn Steel Little	Mills College	Miss Rosalind A. Keep
Dr. D. A. Murphy	San Francisco, Cal.	George Fields
Frederick Patek	San Francisco, Cal.	Albert M. Bender
Donald E. Rheutan	Richmond, Va.	Oscar Lewis
Lessing J. Rosenwald	Philadelphia, Pa.	Oscar Lewis
William Edwin Rudge	Hamden, Conn.	Oscar Lewis
John Steinhart	San Francisco, Cal.	S. I. Wormser
Henry Root Stern	New York, N. Y.	B. F. Shipman
Mrs. Alma Roach Stevens	Las Cruces, N. M.	Oscar Lewis
Laselle Thornburgh	Santa Barbara, Cal.	H. D. Pillsbury
Philip J. Wickser	Buffalo, N. Y.	Oscar Lewis

The membership now stands at 520. When it reaches 600 the roll will be closed and a waiting-list established. Meantime members are invited to help fill the remaining 80 vacancies. Candidates whose names are proposed before the roll reaches its maximum will be promptly elected and their participation in the Club's activities will therefore begin at once. During recent weeks the roll has been filling at an encouraging rate. It may well be that the 600 mark will be reached before the close of this year.



## NOTES ON PUBLICATIONS

by ALBERT M. BENDER, Chairman, Publication Committee

THE Club's growing membership list, and the return of better times, are reflected in the reception members have given the last two publications. Both *A Sojourn at San Francisco Bay in 1816*, published last December, and *A Leaf From the King James Bible*, which appeared in May, were promptly sold out, and the Club was unable to fill a number of late orders. In the case of the last named publication, an additional twenty-five copies or more could have been sold had they been available.

This draws attention to a problem that has always presented some difficulty to the Publication Committee. How many copies of a given publication should the Club print? If the estimate is too low, some members—those who order tardily—are sure to be disappointed; if it is too high the Club finds itself with surplus copies that usually take a long time to sell. There is of course no sure way out of the difficulty. At best, one can only review past experiences, try to estimate the extent to which the particular book will appeal to the members and, with these facts in mind, to make a guess that one hopes will not be too far wide of the mark.

In the case of the last two books, our guesses proved to be too conservative. In both instances considerably more than the 300 copies issued could have been sold. For the next publication (announced on Page 1 of the Quarterly) we are guessing a bit higher: 325 copies. In view of the unusual attractions of this book, I am not sure but that the figure is still too low, and that there may be some late-comers whose orders will have to be returned unfilled. From the standpoint of the individual member, however, there is one sure way to avoid disappointment: when the announcement arrives, fill out and return the order-card with reasonable promptness. In any case, don't delay more than a week!

Several interesting books are scheduled for future publication and only lack of space prevents telling something about them here. I cannot forebear, however, making reference to the fact that the Mark Twain Estate has just granted the Club permission to issue what we believe to be a particularly interesting Twain item, hitherto unpublished. Full details of this project will be given in the December News-Letter.